

Plagiarism, contract cheating and final year projects

Conference or Workshop Item

Accepted Version

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Plagiarism, Contract Cheating and Final Year Projects

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Structure

- **Systems Engineering Study Programmes**
- **Three phases of Plagiarism Management**
 - **Pre-emption**
 - **Detection**
 - **Redirection**
- **A recent Case Study**
- **Discussion on the Plagiarism Issue with students**
- **Definition of Plagiarism:**
 - **"the fraudulent representation of another's work as one's own"**
- **Definition of Contract Cheating:**
 - **Outsourcing an Assignment and then 'passing off' as above**

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Systems Engineering Study Programmes

- **Customer – Problem – System Solution**
- 1-year timescale
- 'Own Projects' encouraged

	Own Projects' encouraged		Projects R Us Project Module
	e-Business		Proj. Mngmnt.
Year:	1	2	3
Weighting:	0	1	2

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Three Phases of Plagiarism Management

Pre-emption	Detection	Redirection
Student Condition	TURNITIN	Just Penalty
Assignment	Search Engines	Learning
Regime	Vivas	Logging

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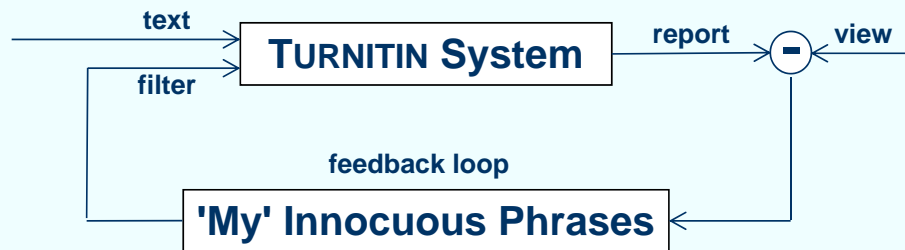
Pre-emption

- **Student Condition**
 - provide an opportunity to learn early – e-Business Essay Challenge in Wk.1
 - ethical sense of right and wrong: 'Just Say "No" to Cheating'
 - capability: it's the weaker students that cheat
 - student feedback
- **Assignment**
 - 'open book', yes, but could it be short timescale?
 - task (inputs i1, i2, ... , personal-factor: outputs created o1, o2, ...)
- **Regime**
 - virtual company: focus on students not 'in the team'
 - transparency of work-in-progress
 - technical: shared filestores,
 - social: open and continual dialogue between the 'actors' – mentor, customer ...
 - make this an explicit parameter of the assessment
 - no last-ditch 'rabbits out of hats' allowed
 - tougher penalties for Contract Cheating

Detection

- **TURNITIN does indicate:**
 - 'already seen' texts
 - over-dependant, 'patch' or plagiarised writing
- **Search-Engines complement TURNITIN**
- **Vivas**
 - probe depth of personal understanding
 - complete the sentences (which may or may not be the student's)
 - what decisions did you take in creating X?
 - how did you build Quality Q into your system?
 - how would you change your system to do Y?
- **Contract-cheating: UoR has, I believe, no regime in place**
 - shortage of tools ... shared, national system needed

['My' TURNITIN – please]



Redirection

- **Just Penalty**
 - Student Union is rightly asking for Consistency
 - later year, repeat offence, greater scale ⇒ greater penalty
- **Learning**
 - ethics, finding/using good sources ... just other things to learn
 - students annotate the sections they have copied in
 - "Every exit is an entrance somewhere else" (Stoppard, 1996)
 - keep the light on over the Honourable Exit door
- **Logging**
 - University needs to be holistic and learn by sharing information
 - Is there a risk that plagiarism is contained 'within boundaries'?

A Recent Case Study

- **Preparation for this workshop**

- "Any UoR students on the BCU Contract-Cheating radar?"
- 2008-02-13, "0 out of 900" ... 2008-02-20, "Yes, 1"
- <http://www.kasamba.com/post-request/answers-list.aspx?QID=356800>

- **Our reaction:**

- check out online use, web-caches, email-accounts, 'Net-traffic logs'
 - some success ... which raises ethical problems of its own
- 'do nothing' or 'pre-empt' ... obviously, aim to pre-empt
- conduct a discussion with the student in the cited module on ...
"The Issues raised by Contract Cheating"
[with a subtext hinting that we had picked up 'Kasamba']

Contract Cheating Issues, A

- q01: As a student, do you understand what Plagiarism is?
- q02: As a student, do you understand why Plagiarism is treated as Academic Misconduct?
- q03: Does an Act of Plagiarism have any Victims?
 - If so, who are the Victims?
 - If not, why is Plagiarism called 'Misconduct'?
- q04: As a student, how would you feel if a fellow student is Contract Cheating on an Assignment which you were doing honestly?

Contract Cheating Issues, B

- q05: As a student, how would you feel if the student had Contract Cheated previously?
- q06: Is premeditated cheating worse than ... doing it in a hurry at the end?
- q07: Imagining that you are a Teacher rather than a Learner:
 - How would you defend the integrity of the Assessment Process?
 - How would you pre-empt Plagiarism and Contract Cheating?
 - How would you deal with it after it was detected?
- q08: Has the Student Body any concerns about ... the way UoR is managing the issue of Plagiarism?

Contact Cheating Questions, C

- q09: Is it ethical for Teachers
 - to track 'Placed Contracts' on websites, e.g., by RSS- or email-feed
 - to work as 'Experts for Hire' on websites
 - to pose as an 'Expert for Hire' just to identify cheaters
 - to actually answer 'own Assignment' to detect Contract Cheaters
- q10: Is it ethical for University 'A' to inform University 'B' that:
 - a student is apparently trying to Contract Cheat on an Assignment
- q11: Given that University 'B' is aware of possible C Cheating
 - should 'B' sit back and wait to see if the cheating actually happens
 - should 'B' attempt to pre-empt and discourage Contract Cheating

Contract Cheating Issues, D

- **q12: Is it ethical for Information Technology Services to:**
 - to consult its logs to see what activity there is on certain websites?
 - put a 'watch' on certain websites?
 - to inspect the web- and email-activity of suspected students?
- **q13: Should Universities use Coursework Assessment differently:**
 - more immediate deadlines!
 - vivas (Oral Examinations) and written examinations only?
 - written examinations only?
- **q14: Do you have any questions to add to this list?**

In Summary ...

- Following a painful case of plagiarism three years ago
- UoR.SSE.CSI *Information Technology* Study Programme has
 - taken steps to improve pre-emption, detection, redirection
- 'CSI' is now recommending its practice to SSE and UoR
- Detection kit for Contract Cheating is next to null so ...
- We are currently putting our effort into pre-emption but ...
- Would be willing to contribute to a UK approach to CC Detection